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SUBJECT: AMERICAN CORNER OPENS AT AUK

[¶1.](#) Summary: The Ambassador and President of the American University of Kuwait (AUK) officially opened the American Corner at AUK on Monday, May 9. In addition to opening the American Corner, the Ambassador visited with students at the campus library coffee shop and at AUK's career fair. The Ambassador's visit to AUK received extensive positive press coverage. View pictures of the opening at: HTTP://KUWAIT.USEMBASSY.GOV/PRESS_RELEASE_05-09-2005.HTML.
End Summary.

The American Corner at AUK

[¶12.](#) The Ambassador and the President of AUK, Dr. Shafiq Al-Ghabra, opened the newest American Corner in Kuwait. The American Corner overlooks the Gulf from the second floor of the glass-enclosed AUK campus library and currently features two computers, and about 250 books. AUK's Library Director thanked PAS staff, saying that the collection was outstanding and that many of the books, which would not have been part of AUK's regular collection, would offer great insight into U.S. culture, history, society and politics.

AUK American Corner; Audience and Library

[¶13.](#) AUK is a new private university in Kuwait, in its first year of operation. The target audience of the American Corner will be primarily the AUK student population, which is estimated at being 70% Kuwaiti. The current enrollment is 500 students. AUK aims to increase enrollment by 500 students per year until reaching 2,000 students. Next fall, 1,000 students are expected to attend AUK.

[¶14.](#) AUK's library and therefore, the American Corner are open to the general public. Though the general public will not be able to check out books from the corner collection, they will be have access to view the materials and make use of the supervised internet connections.

[¶15.](#) Additionally, the AUK library has included the Corner collection as part of its general computerized catalogue system under the label, "ACK." Any student at AUK who finds a book that they would like to use from the collection will know that it is part of the American Corner collection. Likewise, any catalogue user would be able to find a book in the Corner collection, if searching by topic, through the library's central computer catalogue-the first such integration of an American Corner collection into the general collection catalogue in Kuwait.

Sit-Down With Students at the Coffee-Shop

[¶16.](#) Following the ribbon-cutting ceremony, student librarians showed the Ambassador and AUK President the catalogue system and usinfo.state.gov bookmark at the computer station. The Ambassador and AUK President then held a discussion with the press. The AUK President thanked the Ambassador for the Corner and for cooperation between the Embassy and AUK and the Ambassador congratulated Dr. Al-Ghabra on making AUK a strong academic institution in such a short period of time.

[¶17.](#) The Ambassador and AUK President then had an informal discussion with AUK students at the Library's coffee-shop. The new student-government president briefed the Ambassador on AUK's recent student elections, Kuwait's first elections where no groupings were allowed, where candidates held open debates on issues, and where a female student ran for President (though she did not win). The eager students questioned the Ambassador on visas, Lebanon, Iran, Women's rights, free trade and other issues.

[¶18.](#) Finally, the Ambassador and PAS staff attended AUK's first career fair, where the Embassy had a table promoting jobs at the Embassy for local staff and studying in the U.S.

Press Coverage

[¶19.](#) The American Corner event received positive press

coverage, including pictures of the Ambassador and AUK President with students, in the following Kuwaiti daily newspapers (with language and estimated circulations included):

- Al-Anba, 5/10/05, p. 4, Arabic, circ. 40,000
- Al-Qabas, 5/10/05, p. 12, Arabic, circ. 65,000
- Al-Rai Al-Aam, 5/10/05, p. 8, Arabic, circ. 70,000
- Al-Seyassah, 5/10/05, p. 5, Arabic, circ. 45,000
- Al-Watan, 5/10/05, p. 5, Arabic, circ. 65,000
- Arab Times, 5/10/05, p. 2, English, circ. 40,000
- Kuwait Times, 5/10/05, p. 1 and 24 (3/4 of a page of pictures) English, circ. 35,000
- The Daily Star, 5/10/05, p. 19, English, circ. 15,000

¶10. Press coverage featured quite diverse headlines from the Corner opening, AUK Career Fair, and especially from the Ambassador's sit-down discussion with AUK students at the library coffee-shop. Headlines focused on visas (Al-Rai Al-Aam), American culture (Al-Seyassah), the realization of women's political rights in Kuwait (Al-Qabas), cultural exchange (Al-Watan), Lebanese demonstrations leading toward democracy, not chaos (Al-Anba), understanding America better (Arab Times), and students getting a taste of the "real world" (Kuwait Times).

Comment

¶11. The American Corner at AUK will be a valuable tool for reaching the youth audience at AUK and the general public which uses the library. Though AUK students are viewed as pro-American, this is not necessarily the case, as many AUK students are non-Kuwaiti and many Kuwaitis do not necessarily remember the liberation of Kuwait or have positive views on aspects of American policies in the region or on aspects of American society and values. The Corner will allow additional programming, including lectures on American society and culture which will significantly increase the understanding of Kuwaiti youth toward American culture and values-as has been the case in American Corner programming at Kuwait University which has received high marks from Kuwaitis and American lecturers alike.

LEBARON